

ICT & Art Connect: Ministry of Measurement - collecting data as art

Geoff Howse¹

Extended Abstract. This event examines how artist collective **thickear** are exploring and critiquing current issues surrounding contemporary processes of data collection and exchange.

In a climate of frequent media revelations concerning alleged breaches of supposedly secure and private personal information, and the increasing commodification of our data and behavioural patterns as currency to be exchanged for online services, how then do we both evaluate and negotiate these interactions? Is it possible to make informed and considered judgements about the current and future implications of such transactions, or are we increasingly forced to make leaps of faith?

Our intellectual and emotional dilemmas at this point of exchange are amongst the key themes examined by **thickear** in works such as “Ministry of Measurement” [1], “MoM Data Exchange” [2] and “Pink Sheet Method” [3].

The first of these, performance/installation “Ministry of Measurement”, was the inaugural project to be supported by the EU FP7 FET funded initiative ICT and Art Connect [4] and a major feature of the Barbican Centre’s “Hack the Barbican” [5] season in 2013. The work re-purposed the Barbican’s large cloakroom area to present a dystopian data collection centre as both performance and interactive installation: a bureaucratic nightmare nestled deep in the bowels of the London arts centre. The work used audio and visual mise en scène, including the Barbican’s own Brutalist architecture, to heighten audience’s apprehension at providing seemingly innocuous data.

The second piece, “MoM Data Exchange”, invited delegates at an ICT conference in Vilnius to exchange personal information in return for data originally provided by participants at the Barbican event.

Whilst the third work, “Pink Sheet Method”, currently taking place across venues in Manchester, London and Brighton, encourages the public to judge the value of their own data against the value of the art work itself¹.



Figure 1. “Ministry of Measurement” by **thickear**

REFERENCES

- [1] thickear: G. Howse, J. James, K. Logan, T. Sendon *Ministry of Measurement*. <http://www.thickear.org> (2013).
- [2] thickear: G. Howse, J. James, K. Logan, T. Sendon *MoM Data Exchange*. <http://www.thickear.org> (2013).
- [3] thickear: G. Howse, J. James, K. Logan, T. Sendon *Pink Sheet Method*. <http://www.thickear.org> (2014).
- [4] ICT and Art Connect Consortium *ICT and Art Connect Project*. <http://ict-art-connect.eu/> (2012).
- [5] Hack the Barbican Consortium *Hack the Barbican*. <http://hackthebarbican.org/> (2013).

¹ Geoff Howse/thickear
Email: thickear.is@gmail.com